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ABSTRACT

The study examined the effectiveness of strategies and instructional interventions used in the regular classroom setting in one California school district (1984-85) before students were referred to special education. Findings of a survey of 61 teachers from 41 schools indicated that the three most frequently applied strategies were individualized instruction or attention, group activities (cooperative student activities, small group instruction) and the use of special curriculum materials. The three most effective strategies were identified as using special materials, behavior modification (praise, rewards, or a behavior monitoring system), and group activities. Similar strategies were used by teachers at all school levels (elementary, middle, and secondary). (JW)

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Administrative and Evaluation Services Office

Report No. 3

Series: 1985-86

Evaluation Report: EVALUATION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM, 1984-85 SCHOOL YEAR, EFFECTIVENESS OF MODIFICATIONS OF THE REGULAR PROGRAM AS ALTERNATIVES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

SUMMARY

Background

During the 1984-85 school year, a special study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the strategies used to help students learn in the regular program before referral to special education. The study was conducted by personnel from the district Administrative and Evaluation Services Office through a survey of 94 teachers at 48 schools. Sixty-one teachers from 41 schools responded to the survey by describing the typical strategies used at their schools. The strategies are summarized and reported in this report.

Highlights of the Findings

- A. The three most frequently applied strategies used to help potential special education students in the regular education program include:
 1. Individualized instruction or attention;
 2. Group activities; and
 3. Using special materials/curriculum.
- B. The three most effective strategies identified by the teachers among those popularly used are:
 1. Using special materials/curriculum;
 2. Behavior modification; and
 3. Group activities.
- C. It is recommended that school principals and teachers should be made aware of the strategies which have been frequently used and found to be effective. Workshops on the application of these strategies should be provided.

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EC 200557

BACKGROUND

During the 1984-85 school year, an evaluation of the district Special Education Program (SE) was conducted by personnel in the Administrative and Evaluation Services Office. The evaluation was required by the state. The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of modifications of the regular program as alternatives for special education. Two evaluation questions were addressed:

- A. What are the instructional interventions most often used before a student is referred for special education?
- B. How effective are the interventions applied in helping students function in the regular school program?

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The evaluation was accomplished through analyzing data collected from surveying a sample of regular classroom teachers. This was done in two steps:

A. Step 1 - Principals' Recommendations

A memorandum was sent to the principals at 70 schools in the district which included five high schools, nine middle schools, and 56 elementary schools. They were asked to recommend two teachers at their school sites to be involved in the study. These teachers must either have made a great effort in adjusting their instructional activities, or worked closely with others in helping the potential special education students function in the regular program.

B. Step 2 - Teacher Survey

Forty-eight principals (from five high schools, seven middle schools, 36 elementary schools) submitted the names of 94 teachers to the evaluator. A survey form consisting of open-ended questions was mailed to these teachers. They were asked to describe the types of typical special education symptoms observed and the kind of instructional interventions applied among the potential special education students. They were also asked to give judgment on the effectiveness of each intervention used. A copy of the survey form is attached (Attachment A).

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Teachers' responses to the survey regarding the strategies used, effectiveness of each approach, comments, and type of special education symptoms noticed were analyzed. These data were examined to determine the kinds of approaches used, the effectiveness of the most often applied strategies, and the differences between school levels in effectiveness and types of approaches.

Results from this analysis are summarized in this report. Listings of the strategies used are included in another special report which was prepared for the special education personnel to be used for planning staff training. A sample listing of these strategies is shown in Attachment C.

A. Most Often Applied Strategies

Two hundred and sixty-seven strategies were examined. For each of these strategies, one to three keyword(s) were assigned according to the types of approaches made. (There were 36 keywords.) Strategies were grouped accordingly. Frequencies of application by teachers for each type of approach were counted. Kinds of strategies used were ordered according to the frequency. Listed in Table 1 are the types of strategies which were used by at least ten teachers. These data indicate the following:

1. The three most often used strategies include:
 - a. Individualized instruction or attention;
 - b. Group activities; and
 - c. Using special materials/curriculum.

The descriptions of these strategies are summarized in Attachment D.

2. Although some differences were found between the approaches used in the elementary and secondary schools (e.g., counseling was most often used in middle schools but seldomly applied in elementary schools), similar types of strategies were commonly used by teachers in all school levels. For example, individualized instruction/attention and the use of special materials were often applied by teachers in all school levels.

TABLE 1
Listing of the Most Often Applied Strategies

TYPES OF STRATEGY	FREQUENCY	
	NO.	% ¹
ALL SCHOOL LEVELS		
One to one instruction/care/attention	53	20
Group activities	47	18
Special material	39	15
Tutoring	39	15
Communicating parents/home	29	11
Adjusting instruction	26	10
Counseling	27	10
Behavior modification	28	10
Using a system	25	9
Monitoring progress	25	9
Rewarding for better behavior	21	8
Working with students in a time frame	15	6
Working with students on their level	12	4
Isolate	12	4
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS		
One to one instruction/care/attention	39	19
Special material	29	14
Tutoring	29	14
Group activities	24	12
Behavior modification	23	11
Using a system	23	11
Monitoring progress	20	10
Rewarding for better behavior	19	9
Working with students in a time frame	13	6
Adjusting instruction	11	5
Communicating parents/home	8	4
Counseling	4	2
Isolate	5	2
Working with students on their level	3	1

¹Based on the total numbers of strategies used in the specific school level: 267 for all school level, 201 for elementary, 40 for middle, 26 for high schools.

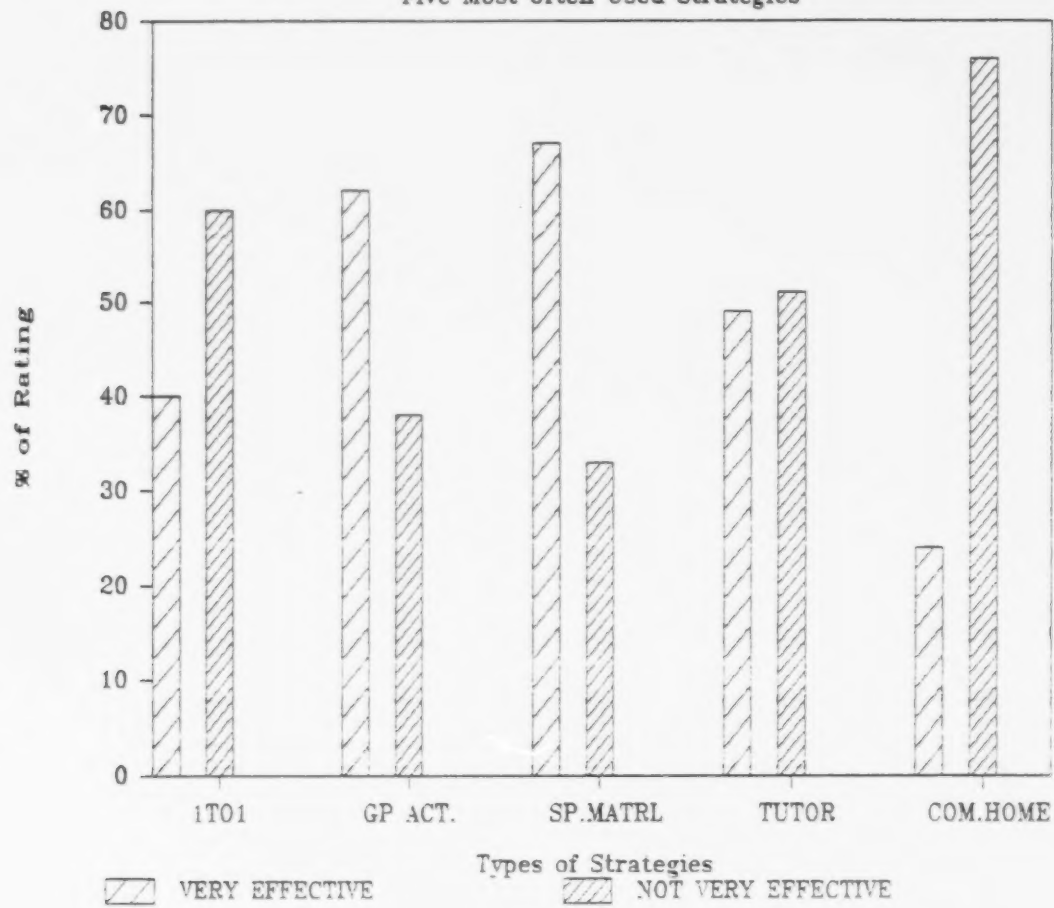
TABLE 1 (Continued)
Listing of the Most Often Applied Strategies

TYPES OF STRATEGY	FREQUENCY	
	NO.	% ¹
MIDDLE SCHOOLS		
Counseling	11	28
One to one instruction/care/attention	10	25
Special material	8	20
Group activities	6	15
Tutoring	6	15
Communicating parents/home	4	10
Working with students on their level	4	10
Adjusting instruction	3	8
Monitoring progress	3	8
Behavior modification	2	5
Rewarding for better behavior	2	5
Using a system	1	3
Working with students in a time frame	1	3
Isolate	0	0
HIGH SCHOOLS		
Group activities	17	65
Communicating parents/home	17	65
Counseling	12	46
Adjusting instruction	12	46
Isolate	7	27
Working with students on their level	5	19
Tutoring	4	15
One to one instruction/care/attention	4	15
Behavior modification	3	12
Monitoring progress	2	8
Special material	2	8
Using a system	1	4
Working with students in a time frame	1	4
Rewarding for better behavior	0	0

¹Based on the total numbers of strategies used in the specific school level: 267 for all school level, 201 for elementary, 40 for middle, 26 for high schools.

FIGURE 1: EFFECTIVENESS

Five Most Often Used Strategies



B. Effectiveness of Strategies

Teachers' judgments on the effectiveness of strategies were analyzed. Frequency counts and percents of teachers who gave a 'very effective' rating to strategies were computed. Types of strategies were ranked according to the percentage values. These data are displayed in Tables 2, 3 and 4 and are summarized as follows:

1. The three most effective strategies among the popularly used approaches (Table 2) include:
 - a. Using special materials (or curriculum);
 - b. Behavior modification strategies; and
 - c. Group activities.

The descriptions of these strategies are summarized in Attachment D.

2. Some of the most often applied strategies were also found to be the most effective. These strategies include using special materials and group activities (Table 2).
3. Some of the most often used strategies were not necessarily very effective. For example, the individualized approach was most often used by teachers, but the majority of the teachers did not think it worked very effectively. A similar finding was also noted for using a tutorial approach. This is demonstrated by the graph in Figure 1 and the data shown in Table 2.
4. The level of effectiveness of the strategies varied very little as the school level changed from elementary to the secondary. This is shown by the data listed in Table 3 and the statistics shown in Attachment B.

C. Special Education Symptoms

In elementary schools, the most often noted special education symptom was students' poor grades or achievement. In secondary schools, the most often noted special education symptom was students' poor self-control, hyperactive, or disruptive in class. This is indicated by the frequency count of the type of symptoms described by teachers. These data are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 2

Listing of the Most Effective Strategies Among the Popularly
Used Strategies by School Level

<u>TYPES OF STRATEGY</u>	<u>VERY EFFECTIVE</u>		<u>FREQUENCY OF USING</u>
	NO.	%	
ALL SCHOOL LEVELS			
Special material	26	67	39
Behavior modification	18	64	28
Group activities	29	62	47
Working with students in a time frame	9	60	15
Using a system	14	56	25
Isolate	6	50	12
Working with students on their level	6	50	12
Adjusting instruction	13	50	26
Tutoring	19	49	39
Monitoring progress	11	44	25
Rewarding for better behavior	9	43	21
One to one instruction/care/attention	21	40	53
Counseling	8	30	27
Communicating parents/home	7	24	29
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS			
Working with students on their level	3	100	3
Isolate	5	100	5
Adjusting instruction	11	100	11
Counseling	4	100	4
Group activities	24	100	24
Working with students in a time frame	9	69	13
Communicating parents/home	5	63	8
Special material	18	62	29
Behavior modification	14	61	23
Using a system	12	52	23
Tutoring	15	52	29
One to one instruction/care/attention	17	44	39
Rewarding for better behavior	8	42	19
Monitoring progress	7	35	20

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Listing of the Most Effective Strategies Among the Popularly
Used Strategies by School Level

TYPES OF STRATEGY	VERY EFFECTIVE		FREQUENCY OF USING
	NO.	%	
MIDDLE SCHOOLS			
Using a system	1	100	1
Behavior modification	2	100	2
Special material	6	75	8
Working with students on their level	3	75	4
Monitoring progress	2	67	3
Tutoring	3	50	6
Rewarding for better behavior	1	50	2
One to one instruction/care/attention	4	40	10
Group activities	2	33	6
Counseling	3	27	11
Communicating parents/home	1	25	4
Isolate	0	0	0
Working with students in a time frame	0	0	1
Adjusting instruction	0	0	3
HIGH SCHOOLS			
Monitoring progress	2	100	2
Special material	2	100	2
Using a system	1	100	1
Behavior modification	2	67	3
Tutoring	1	25	4
Group activities	3	18	17
Adjusting instruction	2	17	12
Isolate	1	14	7
Counseling	1	8	12
Communicating parents/home	1	6	17
One to one instruction/care/attention	0	0	4
Rewarding for better behavior	0	0	0
Working with students in a time frame	0	0	1
Working with students on their level	0	0	5

TABLE 3

Comparison of Effectiveness of Strategies by School Level

	K-6	7-8	9-12	Total
Number of Schools Involved	30	6	5	41
Number of Teachers Involved	44	10	7	61
Number of Strategies Studied	201	40	26	267
--Very Effective	95(49%) ¹	17(43%) ¹	11(42%) ¹	123(46%) ¹
--Somewhat Effective	72(34%)	19(47%)	10(39%)	101(38%)
--Not Effective/No Judgment	34(17%)	4(10%)	5(19%)	43(16%)

¹% based on the number of strategies studied at the specific school level.

TABLE 4

FREQUENCY COUNTS OF SE SYMPTOMS

SCHOOL LEVEL	NUMBER OF CASES DESCRIBED BY TEACHERS	SYMPTOMS* OF SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS OBSERVED BY TEACHERS														
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1-6	113	65	22	26	40	42	40	38	36	28	25	37	29	25	5	7
7-8	24	12	5	8	6	8	8	6	5	7	7	14	7	3	1	0
9-12	16	4	5	6	3	2	3	1	5	3	4	7	1	3	3	0
11 TOTAL	153	81	32	40	49	52	51	45	46	38	36	58	37	31	9	7

*Code of symptoms:

1. Poor grade achievement
2. Poor attendance & punctuality
3. Can't follow directions
4. Works slowly
5. Can't work independently

6. Doesn't complete work
7. Requires reteaching
8. Short attention span
9. Doesn't follow school rules
10. Demonstrates poor peer relationships

11. Poor self-control/hyperactive/disruptive in class
12. Poor communication skills (problem in articulation/fluency, oral communication, etc.)

13. Poor handwriting
14. Health problems
15. Other (if you choose this, please describe the specific symptoms)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

1. The three most frequently applied strategies in helping potential special education students in the regular education program include:
 - a. Individualized instruction or attention;
 - b. Groups activities; and
 - c. Using special materials/curriculum.
2. The three most effective strategies among the popularly used approaches include:
 - a. Using special materials/curriculum;
 - b. Behavior modification strategies; and
 - c. Group activities.
3. Although some differences were found in the ways in helping the potential SE students between the elementary and the secondary schools, many similarities were noticed in the types of strategies applied and in the effectiveness level of the strategies. Little change was found in the level of effectiveness of the strategies used as the schools moved from elementary to the secondary.

B. Recommendations

1. The strategies which have been frequently used and found to be effective should be made aware of by all the school principals and the teachers.
2. Workshops on the application of the strategies found to be very effective should be conducted for the teachers.

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WAP:NCE:EC:jmg/18P

Administrative and Evaluation Services Office

SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATION
TEACHER'S JUDGMENT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERVENTIONS USED IN REGULAR PROGRAM

Your School _____

Do you have a student study team on your campus? ____ Yes ____ No If "yes," what is the name of the team? _____

Fill out the following form to describe the major types (1 to 3) of behavior exhibited by potential SE students you have worked with. Judge the strategies applied prior to referral to special education.

Types of Major Problems:
(Listed below are typical symptoms of potential SE students)

1. Poor grade/achievement
2. Poor attendance & punctuality
3. Can't follow directions
4. Works slowly
5. Can't work independently
6. Doesn't complete work
7. Requires reteaching
8. Short attention span
9. Doesn't follow school rules
10. Demonstrates poor peer relationships
11. Poor self-control/hyperactive/disruptive in class
12. Poor communication skills (problem in articulation/fluency, oral communication, etc.)
13. Poor handwriting
14. Health problems
15. Other (if you choose this, please describe the specific symptoms)

What types of Major Problem(s) have you observed? (Select 1 or more codes from the left column.)	What has been done to help the student(s) learn in regular program? (List 1 or 2 major efforts such as modification of class activities, tutoring, counseling, special material, bilingual ed., etc.) (Describe the specific strategy used.)	How effective was the strategy? (Check 1 box)			Responsible Person(s) for implementation of the strategy		Comments (Advantage/Disadvantage) About the Strategy
		Very Helpful	Helpful Some-times	Not Much Help	yourself (✓)	Other Staff (Describe position)	
Typical Case 1	1.						
	2.						
Typical Case 2	1.						
	2.						
Typical Case 3	1.						
	2.						

ATTACHMENT B

Comparison of Effectiveness of Strategies Between Elementary and Secondary Schools

	<u>Very Effective Strategies</u>	<u>Not Very Effective Strategies</u>	<u>Total</u>
K-6	95	106	201
9-12	28	38	66
Total	123	144	267

$$\chi^2 = \frac{267 (13610 - 29681 - 133.5)^2}{201 \times 66 \times 123 \times 144} = 0.29$$

ATTACHMENT C

LISTING OF STRATEGIES USED IN HELPING POTENTIAL SE STUDENTS
LEARN IN REGULAR PROGRAM BEFORE REFERRING FOR SE PLACEMENT

SCHOOL	STUDY TEAM	HAC	C	A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	STRATEGY USED IN REGULAR CLASSES	E R RESPONSIBLE F S OTHER E I E F	COMMENTS
C....			1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	Weekly reward system for a) good behavior b) doing all class and homework	V 1 PAR/SUPPRI	All have similar expectations.
C....			1	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Small group instruction	V 1 AIDE S/PAR	
C....			1	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Cross age tutors with reinforcement materials.	V 1 AIDE	1. Punctuality 2. Continually fruitful
C....			1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	a) RSP--reading and spelling b) small group instruction c) modified lessons d) cross-age tutoring e) individualized material (handwriting)	0	
D....			1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Positive reinforcement reward star, stickers, etc. and loss of privileges.	S 0 AIDES	All strategies have been helpful and in most cases very helpful.
D....			1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Have pupils reread directions several times under supervision.	V 0 AIDES	All strategies have been helpful and in most cases very helpful.
P....			1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Use behavior modification class meetings and demand positive compliments.	V 0	All strategies have been helpful and in most cases very helpful.
D....			1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Isolation:	V 0	All strategies have been helpful and in most cases very helpful.
D....			1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1. Drill and utilize services of school resources: nurse, aides, resource teacher. 2. Share with other teachers for homogeneous group.	V 0 AD&S&R TCH	All strategies have been helpful and in most cases very helpful.
D....			1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	Learning Centers: reading, listening, games, tasks, creative writing, etc. as incentives for problem solving.	V 0	All strategies have been helpful and in most cases very helpful.
F....			1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	Require oral language activities that EVERYONE in the classroom must participate in e.g. class meetings, show and tell, etc.	S 1	Good classroom control is essential training necessary for class meetings. Tolerance and acceptance of people's ability must be theme of in classm. Most of the group must be able to work somewhat independently.
E....			1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1. Small group instruction with individualized monitoring. 2. Recouping, as necessary, so that student experiences success.	V 1 AIDE	
E....			1	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1. Individualized monitoring following group activities. 2. Parent contact and assistance at home.	S 1	Depends on mood of home environment.
E....			1	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1. Grouping as necessary. 2. Individualized assistance through cross-age tutors.	V 1 AIDE&TUTOR	Management problems--must be organized.
E....			1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Sitting in front row so tracking can be monitored and attention span worked on.	N 1	Could not motivate, even with rewards.

ATTACHMENT D

A SUMMARY OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED OR EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION:

- Gave encouragement, praise, or reward for good behavior or work;
- Had an assertive discipline plan or used a students' behavior monitoring system which was easy for teacher to monitor or clear for students to follow (e.g., had the behavior chart displayed on the board or taped on students' desk).

GROUP ACTIVITIES:

- Encouraged or arranged students to do cooperative activities, such as to work as partners, to play games, to discuss, to share, to have meetings, etc.
- Provided small group instruction, counseling, tutoring or oral language practice, etc.

SPECIAL MATERIALS:

- Used materials which were appropriate to individual students' level (e.g., lower level materials than regular curriculum).
- Used other special instruction, such as Chapter I or bilingual education/used additional materials to reinforce the subject taught.
- Adjusted the curriculum or materials to suit the students' level (e.g., to alter the sequence, the pace, the steps, etc.).

ONE TO ONE:

- Provided individual assistance or instruction.
- Tutored the students or arranged peer/cross-age tutoring.
- Spent extra time with the students.